Todd Scott
OH 2334_18
Montana Historical Society
Montana Brewery Oral History Project
June 30, 2017

Brian Shovers: My name is Brian Shovers. Today, I'm interviewing Todd Scott, in Bozeman at the Bozeman Brewery. The date is June 30, 2017. You were just describing to me how you designed your logo.

Todd Scott: Right, yes. So, we worked with Ole Nelson of Media Station [Design Works]. We'd gone to him with a napkin drawing of what we thought we wanted our logo to look like. Then, he, with the help of Mike Lozar, who is the son of Steve Lozar, who has the Montana Brewery History Museum in Polson, Montana. They'd borrowed Steve's binders of historical Montana brewery labels and looked through them and came up with the beginning design for the Bozone Select Amber Ale. What they did, was to borrow the "B" from the old Billings Brewing Company. They borrowed the tail on the "E" from Highlander Brewing Company when Highlander was an historical label, back in … this would've been back in 2000. Select obviously came from Great Falls Select -- the font and everything, which was an historical label as well. The Amber Ale banner, underneath, is a classic brewery banner that was featured in a lot of brewery labels. The circular crest at the top came from a similar idea done by Capital Brewery, which I believe was out of Helena. We did a similar thing with the initials, BBC, interlocking them. The tools along the top, are classic symbols of the brewing trade. They come from the Master Brewers Association of America. The bits and parts and pieces were put together from old, Montana historical brewery labels in tribute.

At the time, brewery labels in the late-nineties, early 2000s had all kinds of graphics, dogs, wild life, mountain scenery. There wasn't a brewery label that was just fonts. If you look back historically, all the brewery labels were just fonts. They might have a goat on the label for a bock beer but for the most part, it was various fonts. That's what we wanted to do. We wanted to come up with a classic, classy-looking label that was fonts, not a lot of graphics – distracting graphics. We will always owe a huge debt to Steve Lozar for collecting that kind of stuff and having it available for us to look at it. As far as I'm concerned, it's priceless. Always in style.

BS: Let's begin with what sparked your interest in brewing beer?

TS: Well, that's a long story, but I'll try to *Readers' Digest* it. My interest in brewing beer came back in 1986. Basically, it was after spending a couple of seasons in Yellowstone [National Park]. I fell in love with the West. I'm originally from the Midwest, farm community just north of Indianapolis, Indiana. I came out west, fell in love with Yellowstone and the surrounding area. I was in my early-twenties. I thought I was anti-social and wanted to live off the land and be away from society. I thought, "Well I'm going to have to learn how to start doing' some things for myself. Making toothpaste. Making toilet paper." I thought I would start with making beer. That's as far as I got.

Some friends had a homebrew kit and loaned me some of their equipment. I just fell in love with it. My first batch of beer was an Anchor steam-style beer. I thought it was the best thing I'd ever tasted. It was probably undrinkable, but for me at that point in time, I thought it was fantastic. The bug bit me on that

first batch. I just continued to experiment and get better. Every batch, trying to get better and more unique and learn what the various ingredients did.

BS: Where did you get your brew supplies?

TS: In 1986 I was living in North Tahoe, California. I would drive to Reno to a homebrew supply store to get my supplies every couple of weeks. Brewing five-gallon batches in the kitchen. My formal education was in culinary arts in the early-eighties before culinary was cool. I home brewed for about three years before turning pro.

I was a Sous Chef for Rose Dunsford in North Tahoe for a while. She bought a bed and breakfast in the Napa Valley that had a brewery in its old water tower. I was the only person she knew, at the time, that brewed beer, albeit homebrew. She asked if I'd be interested in taking over the job of brewer because the brewer was also the owner of the bed and breakfast and brewery and he was moving on. At the time, I was working two jobs in North Tahoe. Driving four hours, one way, to learn the brewing trade on my two days off and then driving four hours back. I did that for three months, every weekend until finally the brewer said, "Well, the sale is thru. I'm done. I'm outa here. Here's the keys." He tossed me the keys and that was that. I then took some classes at UC-Davis [University of California – Davis] as well. UC-Davis was very close to Calistoga, northern Napa Valley. That's where I began my professional brewing career was in the northern Napa Valley. I brewed for the Napa Valley Brewing Company from 1989 until 1992, then moved to Bozeman.

BS: Right. How did you get involved with Spanish Peaks?

TS: Well, that's another interesting story. While I was in California, I would call Jürgen Knöller of Bayern Brewing and ask what it took to start a brewery in Montana. He told me that brewpubs were illegal. I didn't understand what he was talking about when he said brewpubs were illegal. Eventually, in '92 we moved. We moved to Bozeman with the hope of starting our own brewery. We didn't have any money per say, but that was what I had listed on my resume. To start my own brewery. I applied for a job at Spanish Peaks, even though they already had a brewer. I thought well maybe I could be an assistant brewer and wash some kegs. Originally, the owner didn't want to hire me because I had listed on my resume that I wanted to start my own brewery. He wasn't interested in feeding the competition. Then, things didn't work out with him and his original brewer. He called me a month later and asked if I would like the job. He had a reputation of being kind of a hot head. I figured I would last with him for about three months. I lasted with him for nine years. We had a fantastic relationship.

BS: What was his name?

TS: Mark Taverniti. He was, next to Jürgen Knöller, he was the second person to open a brewery, in modern times, in Montana.

BS: How'd you know about Jürgen?

TS: Because his was the only craft brewery in the state at that time. When I started brewing in California and started researching breweries in …. I take that back. I think the second coming of Kessler Brewing was also in existance in Helena at that time. Todd Daniels had Kessler Brewing and Jürgen had Bayern. This was before the Internet. Somehow, I managed to get Jürgen's number at Bayern. I would call him from California. Not often, but I called him more than a couple of times to ask him questions about, opening a brewery in Montana. It was difficult to understand him sometimes, but he was very generous with sharing information. At the time he was still married to Tammy from the Iron Horse. They still had the old railroad depot in Missoula.

BS: After nine years of doing that, you were finally ready to set up your own brewery?

TS: Well, not exactly. I brewed for Spanish Peaks for nine years. They had some contract brewing done out of New Ulm, Minnesota with August Schell Brewing Company, the second oldest brewery in the country. They had some contract brewing done at Rainier Brewing in Seattle. I was traveling quite a bit back and forth to Seattle and New Ulm and Bozeman. Then, Mr. Taverniti and his partner decided to build a production facility in their largest market, being California. At that point in time, with the contract brewing going on, I think they were selling beer in something like, forty-five states. They were, at one point in time, the tenth largest brewery in the country, but the bulk of it was contract.

They decided to legitimize, so to speak, their operation and build a production facility in central California. Mark bought some property in King City and built a brewery. I ended up being there for six months putting the brewery together and getting the tanks filled. I had no interest in moving back to California. I'd already been there for 6 ½ years. With this six months, made seven. I just had no interest in moving back to California. I'd approached Mark and asked him if he would be interested in selling his equipment to me. At the time, he said that he would, but thought that I was buying myself a job. I told him I happened to need a job because mine moved to California and I didn't want to move back to California. Bozeman Brewing incorporated in October 2000. I stopped working for Spanish Peaks in January 2001

Before beginning work on Bozeman Brewing, my wife and I took a month and went to Spain. The building that the equipment was in, on North 19th was for sale. I spoke with the relator before we went to Spain, He said, "don't worry about the building selling. They're asking a lot of money for it. I don't think it's going to sell. You just go ahead and go to Spain and have a good time." Of course, as fate would have it, the building sold while we were in Spain. We came back and found ourselves somewhat under the gun to get the brewing equipment out of the building because they wanted to start remodeling.

We had about a month to find a new home for all that brewing equipment. I was searching desperately. I just happened to come across our current location. I was actually looking at the location across the street when the owner of the building saw me looking and hollered from the balustrade, "Hey! Are you looking' for a space to for rent?" I said, "Yes I am." I went over and talked to him. I looked at the space. I thought, this is perfect. This is absolutely perfect. It's a wooden floor, but I can pour concrete. I can put in drains. I mean, it had nothing. It had no water. It was going to have to be from scratch.

BS: It's this building here?

TS: It's the building where the brewery's currently in.

BS: What had been in previously, do you know?

TS: Warehouse. I think a wholesale, organic chip business, mostly just a big, open warehouse. The owner of the building wasn't so sure he wanted to rent to me. He'd never heard of anybody starting a small brewery. He didn't really think he wanted to rent to such a "high risk" tenant. A couple of weeks went by while he considered. In the meantime, I went ahead and called a concrete company. Had them pencil me in for a date to come pour concrete. I didn't even have a lease yet. We inked the lease on like a Monday. They were pouring concrete on Tuesday. I figured, worst case scenario, I'd have to call and cancel. We had no money to secure anything. Timing had to be perfect because the concrete needed to cure before we could move the equipment in. Things worked out. Two weeks after the pour, we were moving equipment in.

Then, began the long, slow process of renovating the space. Painting and putting in plumbing and running electrical. The painting of the ceiling joists took forever because it was all open, bare wood and had to be sealed on every surface as per health codes. I was up and down scaffolding multiple times per day. Moving scaffolding, going back up, spraying. It was a tedious process. After, I guess, six months of working' on the space alone, we managed to put the equipment together, get hooked up and get our first brew in the tank. At the time, my wife was pregnant. It was a race to get some beer out the door before our first child arrived. Our first child arrived five weeks early and beat the first beer out of the tank by a week.

BS: Do you have any idea of what your total investment was to set up the brewery?

TS: Probably in the neighborhood of $80,000 with maxing out credit cards, life savings and second mortgage on the house.

BS: How did you come up with your brand?

TS: Well, I was thinking' about this even before we started working' on the brewery. Fat Tire Amber Ale was the hottest thing in the market in the early 2000's. Everybody had to have it. Every bar had to have it. Everybody wanted to be seen drinkin' it. It was a relatively light amber. It had the color to denote craft but had the flavor that was very drinkable. It was very consumable. I thought that's brilliant. That's exactly what I want to do. I want to brew a beer that looks like that, but doesn't necessarily have the exact same taste profile, but is very similar. Their beer has a very biscuity quality. I didn't like that bisuity quality. Basically, I wanted to brew a Fat Tire, minus the biscuity quality. That's when we came up with Bozone Select Amber.

At that time, during that era, you could have a flagship. That flagship could pretty much carry the company. That was the only beer we brewed for several months. Then … when I say we, I mean, me because I was the only employee here for almost five years. Then came Plum St. Porter, I believe … or it could've been our hefeweizen -- our unfiltered wheat beer. Which I said I would never do, to give a beer a German name with the American style. Our hef was inspired by Dan Abrams[?] of Wolf Pack Brewing down in West Yellowstone. He said, "You gotta have one. It's our top selling beer." There again, that was back in the era when hefs were basically just unfiltered American wheat beers. They were very popular.

Anyway, I did an unfiltered American wheat beer and a porter. Porters were also very popular. They were not a huge section of the market, but a very strong and vocal section of the market back then. People that like porters, that's all they wanted to drink were porters. IPAs [India Pale Ales], back in those days, weren't even on the radar. I mean, you could brew one, but people just didn't like that bitter, hoppy character of an IPA back then. Now, of course, they've been the rage for over ten years now. They're huge.

We've tried to evolve with the times. I think we've had our IPA, as in our Hopzone IPA, as a year-round beer now for seven or eight years because of it's popularity. We used to do our Hopzone IPA as a seasonal. Whenever we would run out of it, in the tasting room, we'd have people walk in the door, see that it wasn't on the menu board and turn around and walk out 'cause that's all they wanted to drink. We realized that we needed to make it year-round. It's just grown in popularity ever since.

BS: When you did starting canning beer?

TS: We started canning in 2011. I think it was late 2011. For the first couple of years, just like production wise, it was Bozone Select Amber only. I like to take things pretty cautiously. I consider myself to be somewhat of a conservative Midwesterner. Not necessarily politically or socially, but certainly

financially. We started canning, started packaging our Bozone Select Amber almost exclusively for the first two years because we wanted to make sure that cans were for real with staying power. It seemed pretty real, but you still saw people out at the bars drinking nothing but bottled beer. For the first couple years, we did nothing but Bozone Select Amber then we started packaging our Hopzone IPA and then our Wheat Beer and our Porter -- Plum St. Porter -- after that. Now, we've got a fifth year-round, our Gallatin Pale, which is probably my favorite beer.

BS: So anyway, was distribution an issue early on?

TS: Yeah, I think distribution is always an issue. We didn't have a tasting room for the first five years of our existence. The focus was and always has been, distribution. We want to get our beer out in the marketplace. We want to use everybody else's four walls to sell our beers and not just our own. We have great distributors.

BS: Who's that?

TS: Bronken's just down … they're literally a stone's throw down the road. At the time, their general manager, Keith Dunn, was a great friend – and still is -- and one of our biggest advocates. He, with his sales team, were fantastic in working with to get our beer out in the market initially. When we first started, I self-distributed. I wanted to get some handles and prove that we could do this on our own before going to a distributor. At the time, I think we had eighteen handles around town.

I started interviewing distributors. Now, I already had a relationship with Bronken's from my Spanish Peaks days, so I think they thought that I would just naturally give them the brand. But I wanted to talk to all the other distributors as well because I really had never spoken to the other distributors. I went to Ed Brandt at Cardinal and we had a nice conservation. I spoke with Carl Lehrkind at Mountain Country. At the time, the sales guys from Bronken's thought that I was going to go with one of these other distributors. One of the guys said to me, with a smile on his face, if I went with one of those other distributors, they were going to go out of their way to destroy me. It was a little bit of a joke, but it was also a little bit serious. So, you know, in the end, I went with the distributor that I knew best. Who I thought could do the best job for us. That was the folks that I had almost a ten-year relationship with. It turned out that that was the right choice because these guys are just fantastic to work with.

BS: How widely distributed is your beer?

TS: We were exclusively distributed by Bronken's in the greater Bozeman area for the first … I'm gonna say maybe six, seven years. Then, we got a call from a distributor in Billings, Intermountain, because some of the restaurant managers in chain stores in Bozeman went down to either open locations in Billings or take over management of the chain stores in Billings and they were asking for our beer. At the time, we didn't have the capacity to expand our distribution.

After a couple of years of them calling, we decided to go down and talk with them. Have a meeting. Let them know, that we could supply their two or three accounts that wanted our beer, but we didn't have the capacity to supply their whole market. The meeting was basically, don't distribute our beer. You can supply these two or three accounts, but don't go out and try to distribute our beer and sell it. Which was a meeting unlike anything they'd ever experienced before. They'd never had an account come in and ask not to sell the beer. Then, as we grew and got more tanks and more capacity, we said all right. Go crazy. They turned out to be a fantastic distributor as well. We also allowed limited distribution in Helena as well with Mountain Country. We had met with Carl and Mountain Country in Bozeman. We thought it could be a perfect because they have a location in Bozeman and Helena. They can pick up here and take it

to Helena. We have Helena and Billings and then just last summer, we started distributing in Missoula and Butte. That's with Summit.

BS: What's your current production level?

TS: We are producing about 6000 barrels a year. It's not a huge amount but it's an amount we're comfortable with at this point in time. We don't have capacity to grow much more than that. We could add a little bit, just with efficiencies, but not necessarily so with the seasonality. We don't have any more space for tanks. I can take you up and give you a little tour of the brewery after we're done. You'll see that we just don't have the space to shoehorn in another fermenter if we wanted to.

BS: What was the source for your brewing equipment and supplies?

TS: My original source for equipment was used, from Spanish Peaks Brewing. It was a manufacturer out of Canada. Once we decided to expand and invest money in the infrastructure for the expansion, it was AAA Metal Fab from the Dalles, Oregon. This is a company that I'd worked with while with Spanish Peaks. I was familiar with them, familiar with their quality. Our packaging line is Cask and comes from Canada. At the time, they were the only micro-canning line available.

Then, my ingredients, that's another story. In Montana, we have what's called the Golden Triangle, where some of the best malting barley in the world is produced. I thought I wanted to use American ingredients as much as possible. As far as I'm concerned, we grow the most aromatic and flavorful hops in the world. We have some of the greatest malting barley right here in Montana. The water source, you can't get much purer a water source than the mountains of the Rockies. I thought why not concentrate on American ingredients. I mean, we have some of the best in the world. That was where I sourced my ingredients from. Originally, we sourced our malt from Great Western Malting out of Vancouver, Washington and switched to Malteurop when they opened a malt house in Great Falls. We get our base malt, from Maleurop. Which comes right out of Great Falls, four hours away. Most of our hops, come from Yakima, Washington. Now, we do brew specialty beers where we want more of an European character. Seasonal beers like our pilsner or our Oktoberfest, we'll get ingredients out of Germany or the Czech Republic to make it true to style. For the most part, we're using the best ingredients on the planet, which are American.

BS: The Malteurop facility apparently is the largest malting facility in North America. That's what I've been told.

TS: When they built that facility, I want to say it was the largest and most technically advanced in the world at the time. I'm sure another company has usurped them, that's just kind of the nature of industry.

BS: It's owned by Belgians?

TS: It was owned by a French company, Froedtert, I believe, at one point in time. I think, at this point, last I heard, it was an Australians company. Yeah. It's Malteurop with no e on the end, which is kind of interesting.

BS: During the 1990s what was the public's perception of microbreweries?

TS: In the nineties, I think it was still considered somewhat of a fad. I think brewpubs did very, very well. I think the folks who over invested in production facilities … a lot of those folks are no longer around. You know, it was an interesting time, it was an exciting time, but I think we're living in very exciting times now. We have more breweries then we've ever had in the history of the US. There are more styles and brands available to the consumer. I mean whoever heard of a Gose back in the nineties? Nobody.

Nobody ever heard of a unique Berlin sour with salt and coriander. I mean it was exciting then. It's exciting now. There has never been a better time to be a beer consumer.

I am a little fearful of times now because just like in the late-nineties or early-2000s when people were getting into the industry for all the wrong reasons; it seems like we're back to that, where there's a lot of investment going in to start breweries because it seems like a highly profitable, interesting thing to do. This industry really is about passion. It was then, and I think it still is about the passion of the beer. If you don't love what you do, don't do it. There's a lot of blood, sweat and tears that go into making a quality beer. If you're in it for the money, you probably wont have that interest for very long. There are much better investments out there than the brewing industry. If I had all the money that I've invested into this business, I would not do it all over again, if money was all I was after. I would find better investment because there are certainly places to get better returns.

BS: I find it remarkable that with all the breweries, I think it's over 5000 nationwide, that it's only five percent of consumption -- micros.

TS: Right. Yeah. I think it is more than that. I think we broke double digits a while back. It's still a small percentage because the large breweries have such large facilities and they have multiple large facilities all over the country and all over the world that mass-produce beer. It's a lot closer to water, which to some people, depending on what you're looking for, makes it more thirst-quenching.

BS: It's gotta be quite a bit cheaper?

TS: Well, sure because of the scale. Everything has an economy of scale. They can control the market a lot easier then small folks, like myself, which is not at all.

BS: Right. What were your expectations when you got into the business and compare that to the reality of the business.

TS: I don't know that there was a great disparity between those two. I got in because of my love of brewing. Now I'm not brewing necessarily. I haven't brewed a batch of beer in five years. I'm more of a support staff really. I'm here to make sure that everybody else has the tools that they need to be able to do their job. I'm somewhat of a cheerleader. I was in the industry so long before … I've been doing this for … my gosh, what's it been? Twenty-eight years now. I did it for so long before I started up the business. When I started for myself, I kind of already had the expectations. I kind of already knew what it was going to require. A lot of long hours. There were times I would call my wife and leave her a message at 11:30 and say, "I'm just going to spend the night at the brewery because I've got to get up and brew tomorrow morning." And she was home with the baby. Yeah, it was a lotta long hours. When it really got to the frustrating point was when I couldn't keep up with the cleaning of the things that were important to me, but they weren't necessarily important to the quality of the beer. Things like scrubbing the floor. I hated seeing a dirty floor. I wanted that floor clean, scrubbed and cleaned and looking pristine all the time. When I got so busy with production that I didn't have time to scrub the floor, that's when I knew I was going to have to get some help. It was about that time when we were … I think we were working on opening the tasting room and we hired our first employee.

BS: How many employees do you have today?

TS: Today we have nineteen employees. I think ten or eleven of them are part-time -- tasting room help. In the tasting room, we try not to give anybody more than two shifts a week because our goal is to not burn anybody out. Service is a tough job. You're dealing' with the public. Sometimes a demanding public. You can burn out pretty quickly if you're doing' it five days a week, eight hours a day. We don't

want employees to burn out here. We want staff to come in and be happy to be here. For the most part, we have fantastic consumers too. I mean, who's going to be irritated about getting served a nice, cold, fresh beer. We have a pretty happy cliental. The goal is to have happy employees as well. We have seven full time production staff, not including my wife and I. Full-time production stuff is brewing and canning and kegging and filtering and cleaning and more. Everybody stays pretty busy.

BS: What guides you in selecting the varieties of beers that you produce?

TS: Consumer demand.

BS: Really?

TS: Yep. We try to give the consumer what they want. You know, I love reading stories about breweries and brewers and brewery owners who say "we brew beer for ourselves". I mean, that's great. If you can get by with that, that's fantastic. But at the end of the day, if the consumer doesn't want it, you're not going to be brewing' beer for yourself very long. You can brew beer that you like, but mainly you've got to brew beer that sells.

So, we have five-year round beers. Then, we are constantly brewing specialties and seasonals and things to keep life interesting for the consumer and for ourselves. Sometimes we'll hit a dud. We'll brew something and it's like wow! Three months later, we're still trying to get rid of it. But for the most part, the beers we brew are consumed within three to five weeks, I would say. Then, they're gone. Which is perfect because that's maximum freshness.

That's the other thing. Even our production beers, we try to brew on demand. We don't keep a huge inventory of beers in our cooler. We don't have a very big cooler to begin with. We have to coordinate with our distributors for the week what they are going to want. That dictates what we're going to filter and package.

BS: Is there any problems with your current distribution in terms of getting shelf space?

TS: It's a very competitive market. Not necessarily problems. I mean, there's beers that sell better in some markets than other markets. We're not demanding on shelf space. We want to provide what the consumer and market wants. We don't tell the consumer what they want. We try to give the consumer what they want. I think Bozeman is the only market that has every package that we have available. The Helena market has different wants and desires than Bozeman. The Butte market has different desires and needs than Helena so we offer the market what they want. We don't expect shelf space for every package we put out there.

BS: Has there been any issues over time with consistency of the beer?

TS: Not really. I mean, that's something that we've always worked hard to achieve. I think our strong suit is that we are relatively consistent. You're dealing with an agricultural product that changes from year to year and to some degree, day to day as things age. But for the most part, I believe we have hit the nail on the head pretty well with consistency. Like I said, that's been one of our primary focuses. when we started packaging, one of the first things we wanted in place … part of the infrastructure, was a full-scale lab that we could monitor quality control. We've had that since day one on canning. We had that in place before we ever released our first can because we had to get it up to speed, learn what we were doing' in the lab to be able to test the beers for stability and such. We employ a full-time QA/QC lab tech.

BS: What do you know about the formation of the Montana Brewers Association?

TS: Well, I have been part of the MBA when it was originally called Montana Small Brewers Association. I've been involved since its inception back when Jim Haider and Greg Hampton of Sleeping Giant Brewing and Todd Daniels of Kessler Brewing were some of the originators of the association. They were the first folks to even propose the idea of having an association amongst the small brewers in the state. At that point in time, Lewis & Clark [Brewing Company] was called Sleeping Giant [Brewing Company].

BS: Right.

TS: Now, Kessler [Brewing Company] no longer exist. Sleeping Giant is now Lewis & Clark Brewing. There's been a lot of evolution in the industry. It's gone from Montana Small Brewers Association to Montana Brewers Association. The Association eventually hired a lobbyist. When we first started Bozeman Brewing, I wasn't involved with the association because I was so small. I didn't have the extra $150 or $250 a year to pay my association dues. After a couple of years of being open, Brian Clark, from Blackfoot River [Brewing Company]. said, "You know, you really need to be part of the association." He was the president at the time, I believe.

BS: Brian Smith.

TS: Brian Smith. What'd I say? Brian Clark. Yeah, Brian Clark is a distributor up in Flathead. Brian Smith. He said you really need to be part of the association. At that point in time we were starting to finally make a little bit of money. We joined, and we've been a member ever since.

BS: How effective have they been in lobbying the Legislature?

TS: Not terrible effective. Unfortunately, the Montana Tavern Association, who we'd run up against anytime we are asking to change any type of legislation that deals with alcohol. They have a much stronger lobbying influence than a bunch of small, hippie brewers. Back in the day, that's kind of what we were. You know, we were a bunch of small hippie brewers. I think we're getting a little more sophisticated with our lobbying and association.

But we're to the point now, with the association, that instead of trying to fight the tavern owners, we're trying to work with them. Which is the smartest thing we could've ever done. Something that should've been initiated from the get go because of the fact that we're not going to change anything without their support. Though they may not be as strong as they once were, they're still a force to be reckoned with. It's the old saying, you can attract more flies with honey then you can with vinegar. I think we'd rather work with them than against them, and in the end, we're all in the same business. We're all selling alcohol. We're on the manufacturing side. They're on the retail side, but we're all trying to sell alcohol.

If we don't work together, I fear we could have a repeat of what happened in the early-1900s because that faction of anti-alcohol still exists in the country. They're just waiting to gain enough strength to try to kill our industries again. Or at least suppress it as best as possible. It makes a lot more sense to work with the retailers. They are our customers and they are somebody that we've always tried to work with. We didn't even have a tasting room for the first five years of our existence. We would've been dead in the water without the retailers.

BS: Did you play any part in the recent passage of the 60,000-barrel limit for brewpubs?

TS: I played zero part in that, other then I supported it. I did not go up to Helena and speak on its behalf. I was the president of the Montana Brewers Association at one point in time. Ran my head up against the wall many times with our association, and with the legislation. I just thought, … I've done my time.

These things will have to happen at this point with new leadership and with new energy because I'm going to focus mine on what's most important to me now, which is my business. The industry is super important to me. Don't get me wrong. But I've given the industry plenty of my time. At this point, my employees, my staff, and my business deserve more focus and more of my time.

BS: Who's the current lobbyist for the group?

TS: Matt Leow. Matt has other organizations that he also lobbies for. He's been fantastic. Before Matt, it was Tony Herbert. I thought Tony Herbert did a fantastic job as well. Things are evolving. Tony did it for a number of years. The fact of the matter is, to represent the Montana brewing industry is a lot like herding cats because everybody has a different business model and different interests. You've got fifty different businesses. You got fifty different business models. You've fifty different interests. You've got fifty different, unique individuals who want to be heard. To try to please everybody is … it's a challenge. Whoever becomes the leader of the association, the lobbyist, the executive director, whatever they're called these days, really is biting off a huge chunk of … a huge challenge.

BS: Right. This Matt Leow, do you know what his background is?

TS: I probably do. I don't off the top of my head.

BS: How important do you think the industry is to the Montana economy?

TS: Oh, well, because it's my industry, I think it's hugely important to the Montana economy. I mean, I don't have the stats here in front of me, but I know it is a multimillion-dollar industry for the economy of Montana. As is the hospitality and the retail portion of the industry. It's interesting because ten years ago there weren't that many Montana craft handles that you could find at bars in Montana. Now, we have bars that serve exclusively Montana craft beer. It's fantastic! The industry supports the retailers, the retailers support the manufacturers. From the barley farmers to the serving staff and all points in between. I think it's a huge plus. We have beer tourists that seek out breweries-- that's what they do. That is their vacation. They're traveling the country looking for different microbreweries. Visiting different microbreweries. They are visiting Yellowstone too, but it's amazing how many people are traveling just to visit different breweries. It's not just in state folks, there are plenty of out of stater's as well. Yeah, I think it's pretty fantastic.

BS: Do you think there's more room for more breweries in Bozeman and Montana generally?

TS: It's an interesting question. I guess the public will have to decide that. That's not necessarily for me to say. I've always said that the pool is big enough for everybody to swim in. I think some of the water is getting displaced from the pool these days. You know, every time I think oh! We couldn't support another brewery. Another brewery pops up. Appears to be doing just fine. What I like to look at, is Bend, Oregon. Bend, Oregon is about twice the size of Bozeman geographically as well as population. I don't know the exact number of breweries in Bend, but I want to say it's in the forties. Maybe fifties. If you cut that number in half, we've still got space for another ten or fifteen breweries. [laughter] Yeah, it's kind of crazy.

BS: I think Seattle … well Portland, I think, is like seventy breweries or something. Seattle's right up there.

TS: I think San Diego has maybe over a hundred … the greater San Diego area.

BS: Really?

TS: It's crazy. I mean, breweries that I've never heard of. That's another thing, back in the day, twenty-some years ago -- twenty-five years ago -- I may not have known every brewer in every brewery, but I knew a pretty large percentage of them. I certainly knew every brewer in the state. Now, I know most of the owners. I don't know hardly any of the brewers. My brewers know the brewers, but I know very few of the brewers. That's just how the industry has evolved. It's kind of funny to me that I've gotten to the point where I don't know half the people at the meetings that I go to.

BS: How important are microbreweries to the social fabric of the communities?

TS: Oh, I think it's essential. You know, there are people that come to microbreweries that don't go to bars. They like the atmosphere of a craft brewery. We used to think that only being open til eight o'clock was a detriment. Only being able to serve three pints was a negative. At this point, I think it's a huge positive. Not necessarily, only being able to serve to til eight o'clock. It would be awesome in the summertime to see that extended a couple of hours. If it doesn't get extended that's fine by me too because of the fact that my staff can be home by nine o'clock with their children or having dinner with their spouse or going out to dinner with their spouse or significant other.

I think family and community, in that way plays a huge role in what we do because it's important to us that you have the time to interact with your community and you're not workin' and servin' beer until 2 o'clock in the morning. Also, I think most brewery tasting rooms don't have TVs, so conversation, which is lost in a lot of bars with all the multiple TVs, is huge in tasting rooms. It gives people a place to sit and talk without the distractions of a TV.

Now, quite a few breweries do live music. That's fine. We've chosen, at this point, because of space limitations, to not do live music because there again, it's hard to have a conversation when there's loud, live music. The musicians want to be heard. They crank the amps up and it makes it difficult to converse. I mean, I love live music as much as the next person. It's just sometimes nice to be able to go to a place where it's not blasting you out. You can hear each other.

BS: Do you think the brewpub is kind of based on a European model? Would you find this same sort of social thing in Europe?

TS: You know, interesting. I don't think so. I've been to Europe a few times. I haven't been to a lot … I'm tryin' to think how many brewpubs per say that I've been to. Most of them are bars. The thing is, they didn't have, in Europe, they didn't have Prohibition. They didn't … haven't gone down to a single style, like we did in America. The American light lager or the American domestic lager I guess you'd call it. There's always been greater variety over there. Places to go and socialize. The brewpub where they make the beer and serve the beer, I don't think is that … is really big over in Europe per say. At least the few visits I've experienced over there. They have larger breweries that produce a greater variety that sells the beer to the bars. Then, people gather at the bars. The bars are more of the social scene. Now, I have not been to England to see what that … what their pubs over there are like. I can't speak to that. Belgium and the Czech Republic and Germany.

The only brewpub that I've been in was in Germany -- Mainz, Germany. It wasn't that busy. It wasn't the social spot to be hangin' out. It was good beer. Brewpubs may have come from England, I have no idea. I think the current model of the brewpub is pretty American.

BS: I interviewed Hal Harper, who introduced the bill in 1999 to allow breweries to serve beer on-premises

TS: Right.

BS: He was inspired by his father who was a Methodist minister in Helena. His father was very anti-gambling and that was his motivation, you know, the combination of the gambling and sports TV. Yeah, the tavern no longer a place for people go socialize.

TS: Yeah.

BS: That was kinda Hal's inspiration, which is interesting.

TS: Yeah, that is interesting. I didn't know. I didn't know that.

BS: Right.

TS: Yeah, I'm not a really into the gaming portion of things either. I'd love to see gaming and alcohol sells separated. It's amazing, to me, how many bar owners I've spoke with who would actually like to see the gaming portion separated from their license. You know, it would probably make licenses a lot more affordable. They could sell off the gaming portion to somebody who wants it and they could concentrate on selling alcohol and sociability. Gaming jacks the price of licenses up to the point where it's unaffordable for a lot of would be operators. It's not necessarily something they want. It just comes with the scenery, I guess.

BS: Well, that's all the questions I have. Is there anything else you wanna add?

TS: Sorry for takin' up so much of your day. [laughter]

BS: No problem.

TS: Long-winded. Nothing I can think of. Like I said before, I just have concern for the industry and the people that are getting into it these days. I hope everything works out in the future. I want to make sure in the end that we're one of the last men/breweries standing.

BS: Okay. Thanks!

TS: Yeah, Brian.

[Recording ends]